

ICPS newsletter®

Ukraine–NATO relations: National debate needed

The question “To join, or not to join” has overshadowed the entire debate on integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The vast majority of supporters and opponents of NATO membership alike have strong views on this issue, often formed on the basis of political, foreign policy preferences or persistent stereotypes. Instead of agreeing a list of national security issues and looking for solutions based on this list, both camps seem to often work backwards from set views, formulating problems to matched pre-determined solutions. The International Centre for Policy Studies believes that in order to get beyond this current impasse, two key things are needed: rational, unbiased analysis and open, constructive dialog. For this purpose, ICPS organized and held an international conference called “Intensified Ukraine–NATO Cooperation: Challenges and Benefits of Accession to the Membership Action Plan,” with the financial support of the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Ukraine

Clarify the present and decide the future

The main theme of the conference was a phrase formulated by ICPS specialists: “Clarifying the present and deciding the future.” As a matter of fact, experts and some politicians and Government officials are working already to clarify what is going on in the relations between Ukraine and the Alliance. The rest and the overwhelming part of Ukrainian voters do not have enough information and only pick up on messages in the media that are frequently politically biased or incomplete. This is all happening at a time when Ukraine’s accession to NATO and joining the European Union have been declared the main strategic goals of Ukraine’s foreign policy.

ICPS specialists say Ukrainian society needs rational, unbiased analysis and open, constructive dialog. This cannot establish 100% consensus among the country’s politicians or the general public about the single right decision. What it can do, however, is to build consensus about the criteria according to which such decisions should be made and to ensure that both voters and policy-makers are able to make well-informed decisions.

Changing concepts: MAP ≠ accession to NATO

For much of 2006, Ukraine’s Government was preparing for the next stage in

Ukraine’s integration into NATO—accession to the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The very title of this document made it the focus of political controversy. As a result, the new Government refused to implement the Plan, referring to weak support for NATO membership among Ukrainian voters. The Premier did not bother to mention the fact that, although the MAP is a preliminary stage to NATO membership, it does not automatically lead to membership and that only after implementing the MAP will the country be able to make a decision to join or not join the Alliance.

ICPS specialists say that Ukraine needs the MAP primarily as the country’s internal roadmap to political, economic and social reforms, internal security, reinforcement of democratic institutions, protection of human rights, and reform of the judiciary, the military and internal security. The MAP does not provide for mandatory accession to NATO upon implementation. Yet, the MAP is NATO’s program for providing consultations, assistance and practical support in implementing what are often costly internal transformations. Speaking at this conference, ICPS Director Viktor Chumak said that NATO’s Membership Action Plan could play an important role for the Ukrainian Government in both stimulating change and keeping it on track and making the country’s reforms systematic.

By the way...

- The latest issue of **political commentary**, ICPS’s monthly of political analysis, is in, with the latest in economic and political trends from the Centre’s experts. If you want to receive **political commentary** on a regular basis, contact Andriy Starynskiy by telephone at (380-44) 484-4410 or via e-mail at astarynsky@icps.kiev.ua.
- On 18 October 2006, a press conference focused on the first anniversary of the President’s signing of the anti-tobacco bill into law. A report called “Tobacco in Ukraine: National survey of knowledge, attitudes and behavior” was presented. This report was prepared by ICPS on the basis of data of a nationwide opinion poll carried out by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.
- On 16 October 2006, ICPS and the Center of Public Relations organized a roundtable called “Re-formatting the Ukrainian Gas Market: New challenges and prospects.” Presentations were made by ICPS economist Ildar Gazizullin, Gas Traders of Ukraine President Roman Storozhev, and TOV MetInvest Holding’s representative, Andriy Chabanenko.
- Over 12–15 October 2006, ICPS experts Volodymyr Nikitin and Olha Shumylo were in Yerevan as part of the “LGI Policy Fellowship 2006/2007 for Russian-Speaking Experts” project, to hold consultations with fellows participating in this program.
- As part of the “Public Consultations on the EU–Ukraine Free Trade Area” project, a roundtable called “The Ukrainian Transport Sector in the Context of an EU–Ukraine Free Trade Area” was held on 10 October 2006.

The Government lost the campaign to popularize NATO

According to Serhiy Dzherdzh, president of Demokratychna Diya [Democratic Action], an All-Ukrainian community organization, the assurance that a public awareness campaign will succeed is its actual

implementation. Although UAH 5mn were allocated in the 2006 State Budget to carry out such a campaign regarding NATO, there has been practically no effect.

A clear example of what can happen in an information vacuum was the events in June around to the Sea Breeze 2006 military exercises. An ambiguous situation over the fact that permission to actually conduct military exercises in Ukraine had not yet been passed by the VR became the excuse for a large-scale public campaign against NATO. Although NATO has no direct relationship to these exercises and at that point, Ukraine was acting in accordance with existing legislation, the Yekhanurov Government had failed to explain its position effectively to voters so that the public would properly know what was going on. These protests showed just how totally ineffective Ukraine's Governments have been in promoting the idea of NATO among Ukrainians.

At the root of the NATO information campaign fiasco are both political factors—on the eve of the Verkhovna Rada elections, the Government was afraid to explain unpopular decisions—and institutional ones—the lack of a working system in the Government to inform voters about its decisions. In addition, the old Government program for informing voters is hardly suitable for implementation in an environment where the media are free and privately owned. The most important thing is that responsibility for carrying out a public awareness campaign is not clearly defined. Meanwhile, the main lesson of democracy is that any political decision must be public, while the

appropriate minister carries personal responsibility.

The Ukrainian Government must understand one thing: NATO should not and will not take responsibility for informing Ukrainian voters about relations between Kyiv and Brussels. It is the task of Ukraine's own politicians to explain and to deliver their intentions to Ukrainian citizens. Speaking at this conference, NATO Headquarters Press Officer Robert Pszczel emphasized that a country interested in joining the Alliance must focus as much as possible on domestic public opinion.

How to run a public awareness campaign that works

EURISC Project Director Dr. Septimiu Caceu and LATO Secretary General Murnieks Martins shared their experience in running public awareness campaigns in Romania and Latvia. Romania set up a special center was set up responsible for informing the public about NATO. In addition to holding special seminars and conferences, this center also organized workshops for young people. Among the factors that led to the success of the public awareness campaign in Latvia were Government financing and the active involvement of NGOs.

According to ICPS experts, there are two problems in Ukraine. Firstly, very little baseline data is available about the level of knowledge about and attitudes towards the Alliance among different groups of voters. This makes it difficult to plan opinion surveys effectively or to measure possible changes after public awareness campaigns. Secondly, if a public awareness campaign is

perceived as overtly pro-NATO, it is unlikely to have the desired effect.

In Ukraine, a standard public awareness campaign may be insufficient. In addition to informing the public, there needs to be a national debate on security and defense issues in Ukraine. Politicians and voters who have different attitudes towards NATO not only need to hear objective information about problems and threats in this area, but also to participate in a dialog on how to handle these problems, with membership in NATO presented as one of several options.

At this conference, experts concluded that the success of any public awareness campaign in Ukraine would depend on the application of new formats. As Government arguments do little to raise confidence among voters, policy centers need to be involved in this public awareness campaign. As a rule, such experts provide relatively unbiased, objective information, so their opinions are more likely to be heard. ■

The international conference called "Intensified Ukraine-NATO Cooperation: Challenges and Benefits of Accession to the Membership Action Plan" was held as part of the "Public Campaign to Increase Public Awareness of Government Defense and Security Policy" project. This project is being implemented by the ICPS with financial support from the MATRA KAP Program, the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv, and the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands to Ukraine.

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"Socio-Economic Performance and Potential Analysis Capacity" (SEPPAC) project officially launched

One of the most important objectives for a country building a market economy is to institute modern mechanisms for evaluating economic potential and the socio-economic consequences of its realization. This is the main goal of the "Socio-Economic Performance and Potential Analysis Capacity" project, which was officially launched on 13 October 2006. The project is being implemented by the Conference Board of Canada and the International Centre for Policy Studies and financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Over the next three years, ICPS and the Conference Board of Canada will work to increase professional capacity among Ukrainian Government workers and analysts by providing them with instruments to evaluate Ukraine's economic potential and its socio-economic performance. More than 50 employees of government organizations will be trained in applying benchmarking methods and assessing potential output.

Other participants in this project are partners from the Ukrainian Government: the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the National Bank, Derzhkomstat, the state statistics committee, and the National Security Council.

Workshops and seminars will be held by specialists from the Conference Board of Canada, which has gained worldwide recognition for its high quality of economic analysis and forecasting methods. In addition, economists from ICPS will participate in this project with the aim of developing methods for independent expert evaluation of government policy.

Project activities will include the publication of policy papers developed by the Government and NGOs containing comparative analysis of socio-economic indicators for Ukraine and other countries with different levels of economic development. As part of planning government policy, the project will help identify government policy steps aimed at both resolving Ukraine's current problems and eliminating potential bottlenecks. Project participants will also develop a short-term model for evaluating potential output that will be the basis for the country's monetary policy, with due consideration for targeting inflation.

More information about this project can be found on the official SEPPAC website: www.seppac.ca. For additional information, contact Project Manager Olha Romanyuk by telephone at (380-44) 484-4403 or via e-mail at: olga.romanyuk@icps.kiev.ua.

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